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November + December 11

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realscreen

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*INTO THE ABYSS***

**NHK EXPLORES
*THE COSMIC
SHORE***

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Intriguing, poignant and inspiring, *Extraordinary Asians* is a portrait of Asians who have made their lives and those around them uniquely different. Diverse in their backgrounds, these individuals are led by their personal philosophies and goals to battle obstacles in pursuit of their passions.

Produced by: Threesixzero Productions
Genre: Factual
Format: 10 episodes x 60 minutes
Language: Chinese/English
Distribution: Threesixzero Productions
Email: kw@threesixzero.com.sg
Tel: +65 6377 0556



Jewels of the World In HD Stereoscopic 3D

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Produced by: Beach House Pictures
Genre: Factual
Format: 10 episodes x 60 minutes
Language: English
TX: 3NET
Distribution: Off The Fence
Email: bo@offthefence.com
Tel: +31 20 5200 222



24 Hour Asia In HD Stereoscopic 3D

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Produced by: Infocus Asia
Genre: Factual
Format: 1 episode x 60 minutes
Language: English
TX: MioTV and Channel NewsAsia International (Asia)
Email: francis@infocusasia.com
Tel: +65 6341 5612



The Maverick Chef In HD

I CAME, I ATE, I DECONSTRUCT - this essentially is what *Maverick Chef* is all about. Featuring Alvin Leung, a self-taught 2-star Michelin chef and self-dubbed 'Demon Chef', *The Maverick Chef* is an avant-garde travel food show that takes some of the most iconic foods from different cultures, deconstruct them into their bare essence and reconstruct them into surprising modern renditions that taste just as amazing as they stun. Think a version of the traditional tiramisu as 'Sex on the Beach' or the traditional Chinese soup-dumpling, 'xiaolongbao' as a luscious pink glob.

Produced by: Ochre Pictures
Genre: Factual Entertainment
Format: 6 episodes x 30 minutes
Language: English
TX: Life Inspired TV
Email: pedrotan@ochrepictures.com
Tel: +65 9816 0859



The Bandits In HD 360°

The Bandits is a raw exposé of crime in Asia, granting viewers exclusive access into the secretive operations of underworld syndicates. With a real life cast of victims, police and hardened criminals, *The Bandits* confronts the ruthless and money-driven minds of those who break the law. From contract killers to prostitution rings and drug manufacturers, *The Bandits* takes a no-holds barred look at the face of Asian criminality today.

Produced by: Third Floor Pictures
Genre: Factual
Format: 8 episodes x 30 minutes
Language: English
TX: Crime & Investigation (Asia)
Email: omandhas@thirdfloorpictures.com
Tel: +65 6438 7169

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Famed director Werner Herzog trains his impenetrable gaze on Death Row inmates in his latest, *Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life*, a coproduction of Skellig Rock, Creative Differences, Spring Films and Werner Herzog Film.



COMMENT PEOPLE

I confess – as someone who spends a little bit of time online over the course of a week, on occasion I’ve stumbled onto something posted on one site or another that has prompted me to leave some sort of comment. Admittedly, it’s usually something fairly insignificant that makes me take that step – say, a typo that, at that moment, renders me speechless in the real world but able to unleash all sorts of virtual vitriol; or an opinion stated on a topic dear to me that is so obviously *wrong* (well, at least to me) that it needs to be shot to pieces.

After such fits of pique, I usually feel a wave of guilt – not necessarily for calling someone out, but for contributing to the deepening pile of catty commentary on the Web. Thus, the guilt keeps my trigger-happy instincts at bay, and prevents many comments sections from being sullied by my temper-fuelled two cents.

My misgivings about our instant age of opinion mostly stem from the process. Perhaps I’m dating myself when I say I can recall the days when a comment on an article – be it a bouquet or a brickbat – had to come in the form of a “letter to the editor.” A signed one, at that. But online, anonymity rules, and that supposed cloak of invisibility provides some opinion-bearers with a perceived *carte blanche* to wrap their perspectives in mistruths, accusations and – perhaps most egregiously – absolutely miserable spelling.

Still, that doesn’t speak for all readers of online content, and certainly with *realscreen.com*, I find it fascinating to see how some of the stories we run enter the wider world at large, passed along through the ether by people who are in some cases quite far removed from our industry. It’s also illuminating to gauge through the commentary what programming is connecting with audiences, and why.

As we’ve done historically with *realscreen*, we encourage the intelligent exchange of opinion and ideas within our pages and online. Thus, with this issue, we’re introducing a new column from Arrow Media creative director John Smithson, in which he’ll supply his producer’s perspective on a number of topics (find its debut on page 10). This is in addition to our reality columnist Andy Dehnart (page 25), and “Best Practices” contributor Chris Palmer (page 11).

We will also continue to offer our “Think About It” op-ed section for those of you who want to chime in on a topic impacting the non-fiction content industry, and of course, in the weeks ahead we’ll be harassing you for your thoughts regarding who should appear in the upcoming edition of our annual Global 100 listing of the world’s top non-fiction production companies.

So by all means, when it comes to contributing to what we do here at *realscreen*, don’t keep your opinions to yourself. It’s as much your platform as it is ours. Now if you’ll excuse me, there are a couple message boards I have to pop into...

Cheers,
Barry Walsh
Editor
realscreen

realscreen™

The **best** in non-fiction ▶▶

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EXT. VANCOUVER SKYLINE – DAY

Open between snow-capped mountains
and the deep-blue Pacific, zoom into the city and
reach an oasis that opens its doors with heartfelt welcome.

Location: Vancouver

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realscreen out & about

HOWIE MANDEL TO HOST SUMMIT PITCH COMPETITION

The Realscreen Summit's highly anticipated live pitch competition, "So You Think You Can Pitch," will be hosted this year by the multi-talented Howie Mandel.

Mandel, who has been in showbiz for more than 30 years, is currently the host and executive producer of the Fox series *Mobbed*, an unscripted show that puts a hidden-camera spin on the flashmob phenomenon. Also known for his hosting of *Deal or No Deal* and judging on *America's Got Talent*, Mandel will emcee "So You Think You Can Pitch," a high-octane competition that sees brave producers pitch their concepts to a diverse panel of discerning industry judges, including Gary Lico, president and CEO of CABLEready, and Bridget Whalen Hunnicutt, senior VP of global development and production at National Geographic Channel.

"So You Think You Can Pitch" always brings in a standing room only crowd at the Summit and provides an invaluable experience for those selected to deliver their pitches, as well as great learning and entertainment for the audience. This year's session takes place on Tuesday, January 31, 2012, and entries are encouraged across all categories of non-scripted – from serious documentary fare to lighter reality programming. The deadline to enter is December 9, 2011, and the entry form can be found at realscreensummit.com.

We've also just launched the call for entries for the third edition of *realscreen's* Factual Entertainment Awards, the winners of which will be announced during a high-profile ceremony at the *realscreen* Factual Entertainment Forum, at the Fairmont Miramar in Santa Monica, May 30, 2012.

Entries are being accepted in the following categories: competition programming, lifestyle programming, reality programming and non-fiction programming. To find out more about the categories and the sub-categories within each, please visit the official site, awards.realscreen.com. Winners in each category will be determined by juries comprised of industry heavyweights, who will also single out projects that merit special Creative Talent & Craft Awards for directing, cinematography, music, hosting/presenting, editing, casting, most compelling character, and most original concept.

New inductees will join Mark Burnett and Jon Murray in the Factual Entertainment Awards Hall of Fame and the 2011 Personality of the Year will also be announced. Who will follow in Gene Simmons' footsteps?

It's hard to believe another year is coming to a close. On behalf of the entire team at *realscreen*, I wish you the best of the holiday season and a happy and prosperous 2012.

'til next time, go well
Claire Macdonald
VP & Publisher
realscreen

UPCOMING ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

Editorial features: This issue will feature a special report on stock footage, as well as a history genre focus and a feature to celebrate our 2011 Trailblazers.

Bonus distribution:
Realscreen Summit, NATPE, History Makers and the Sundance Film Festival

Booking deadline: December 14

For information on any of these opportunities or to discuss something custom that we can do for you, call *realscreen* sales at **1 416 408 2300** and ask for Melissa Giddens at **X228** or Lisa Faktor at **X477**

To be released in December 2011
for the French presidential elections of April 2012

LOOKING FOR SARKOZY BY WILLIAM KAREL

A juicy political portrait of Nicolas Sarkozy
through the eyes of foreign media

By the acclaimed director of *The World According to
Bush*, *Who Killed Maggie?* and *CIA: Secret Wars*.



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In anticipation of the November 1 launch of PBS UK, channel head Richard Kingsbury and his small team had approximately three months to get the pay-TV channel on air. “We’re actually quite relaxed,” he tells *realscreen*. BY KELLY ANDERSON

PBS UK LIFTS OFF



Kingsbury

Richard Kingsbury was previously running UKTV channels Good Food and Yesterday before he was tapped by PBS in the U.S. to helm PBS UK, a joint venture between Boston-based PBS Distribution and Canadian investor David Lyons.

The commercial pay-TV channel, available via Sky and Virgin, launched November 1 in the UK to about 13 million homes. Kingsbury was brought on board for the venture in June, while the remainder of his four-member core team joined in August.

“The full team has had effectively three months to get the channel up, but we’re actually quite relaxed. When you’ve got a very small team that can make decisions, you can move very quickly,” he says.

One of the main challenges of starting from scratch has been to create buzz for the PBS brand in a country where awareness for the U.S. pubcaster is small. Thankfully, PBS UK has the full support of PBS U.S. president and CEO, Paula Kerger, who came over three weeks ago to the UK to tout the new channel. “Paula [Kerger] has put her personal support behind the launch,” says Kingsbury. “She’s very excited about it.”

With all of the prep work behind them, the PBS UK crew will ring the new network in with a documentary from PBS’ ‘Nova’ strand –

Smartest Machine on Earth, which tells the story of ‘Watson,’ an IBM computing system that challenged human contestants on a game of *Jeopardy!* The rest of the new network’s catalog will consist of PBS Distribution fare, including more from ‘Nova,’ as well as other popular PBS strands such as ‘American Experience,’ ‘Frontline’ and ‘PBS NewsHour,’ which will be scheduled for primetime.

In addition, the mixed genre channel, operating under the tagline “Where Television Matters,” will also air the PBS U.S. version of *Antiques Roadshow*, some children’s programming and food content, and will also feature PBS documentary specials, such as Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s *Prohibition*.

Unlike its American counterpart, PBS UK will be taking advertising, with Channel 4 Sales as its exclusive advertising sales representative.

At the moment, all of the network’s content will be acquired from PBS Distribution, and Kingsbury says it’s too early in the game to determine whether it will commission or acquire UK-produced content down the road.

“We’re focused on getting the channel up, secure and viable, and then we can start thinking about grander plans,” he says.

One of the key considerations for Kingsbury and team is what UK audiences will enjoy

watching, when the content is coming from an American supplier. “We see ourselves as British curators of this program pipeline, and we’re looking at the output and the catalog and thinking, ‘Yes, there’ll be an interest in that,’ [or] ‘that will probably be too domestic,” he offers.

Kingsbury says that British audiences are interested in U.S. programming covering big topics of international interest, such as 9/11, al-Qaeda and the American financial crisis. However, he says he will take a pass on docs that aren’t as universal, such as programs focused on American historical figures that aren’t necessarily household names in the UK.

“[In] my experience of playing PBS content on other channels, people don’t mind where programming comes from as long as it’s a good story and it’s got some relevance for them,” he says.

“I think PBS is going to be distinguished [from other channels]; it’s in an interesting space,” he continues. “Most channels are moving toward entertainment formats, even if they’re factual channels, and that leaves space for channels that have a bit more ambition in terms of telling people something, inspiring people or providing a different perspective.

“PBS content goes deep on a lot of individual subjects that a lot of people care about.” ■■

YOUTUBE UNVEILS

100

BY BARRY WALSH

NICHE CHANNELS

YouTube has revealed the 100 niche channels it's adding to its online video portal, as well as the content producers, filmmakers and media companies behind them, and a sizable number fall squarely in the non-fiction/unscripted camp.

Production companies that have been greenlit for channels include Electus, FremantleMedia, Magical Elves, @radical.media, Lionsgate, Vuguru, BermanBraun, Rainn Wilson's SoulPancake and Ashton Kutcher's Katalyst.

Vice, The Onion Broadcasting Company, *The Wall Street Journal*, the WWE and Red Bull House North America will also have their own channels, while other channels will feature regular contributions from celebrities in assorted disciplines, including Jay-Z, Madonna, Pharrell Williams, skateboarder Tony Hawk, filmmaker Jon Chu, *CSI* franchise creator Anthony Zuiker, basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal, and self-help guru Deepak Chopra.

YouTube will also feature dedicated channels from several of its long-standing content partners, including Clevver Media, which launched on the video portal in 2008, and, of course, Smosh, the web-based comedy duo that began

posting clips on YouTube in 2005 and grew to become one of the most popular destination channels on the site.

While not all the channels have been named as of yet, descriptions of content for each are available on the site. Ben Silverman's Electus will produce a food channel that will feature "loud characters, unique personalities, [and] outrageous tidbits on everything food," as well as a currently unnamed pop culture channel and NuevOn, a bilingual Hispanic pop-culture and celeb-themed channel featuring Sofia Vergara.

FremantleMedia, meanwhile, is behind a pets-and-animals channel, as yet unnamed, which is billed as "a place for animal lovers that celebrates the bond between people and their pets, and shows how they enhance our lives."

Magical Elves will bring its expertise in fashion programming to YouTube with its Little Black Dress channel, while @radical.media will present an education-oriented channel, as yet unnamed, which will provide "extraordinary access to the people, places and ideas that are transforming the world."

Lionsgate will create a fitness channel "featuring top brands/personalities, and cutting-edge workouts," while Rainn Wilson's SoulPancake will produce "energetic, quirky, and highly creative reality and docu-style

programming." BermanBraun, meanwhile, is behind a food channel called Taste in partnership with publisher Rodale, as well as The LOGE, a movie news channel, and Vigor, a health and wellness channel.

According to reports, YouTube is doling out more than US\$100 million in advances for the 100 channels, with some partners slated to get as much as 55% of ad revenue once the advances for their channels are recouped.

"Cable television expanded our viewing possibilities from just a handful of channels to hundreds, and brought us some of the most defining media experiences of the last few decades — think MTV, ESPN and CNN," said Robert Kyncl, global head of partnerships for YouTube in a blog post announcing the channels. "Today, the web is bringing us entertainment from an even wider range of talented producers, and many of the defining channels of the next generation are being born, and watched, on YouTube."

Kyncl added that "for advertisers, these channels will represent a new way to engage and reach their global consumers."

The first batch of channels was due to roll out in November, with more being added over the course of next year. In total, they'll feature up to 25 hours of new, original programming a day.

"They'll be available to you on any Internet-connected device, anywhere in the world, with all the interactivity and social features of YouTube built right in," said Kyncl. ■■



Jane Lipsitz (left) and Dan Cutforth are behind a new YouTube channel



POINTED ARROW

ARE we living in a parallel universe?

The headlines scream about the worst economic crisis in living memory, yet somehow here at the coalface things do not feel that bad. The broadcasters we work with all crave high quality, innovative and ambitious ideas — and are prepared to put proper money on the table. It feels as though non-fiction is a very good place to be — it seems much tougher in other genres. In the UK, Channel 4 is on a commissioning spree with budgets for both docs and specialist factual on the up. At the BBC, specialist factual has thus far survived the worst of the big cuts from its “Delivering Quality First” initiative. The mood at MIPCOM in Cannes recently was upbeat and it was the same vibe on a recent trip to the West and East Coasts of the U.S. So — crisis? What crisis?

When we set up Arrow Media earlier this year we did occasionally wonder if we were bankers starting our new indie with the world in financial turmoil, but we approach 2012 with optimism. Sure, there are some harsh realities around — run of the mill ideas will get nowhere; the only way forward is to be good or be cheap; financing shows gets increasingly creative and is not for those of a nervous disposition. But broadcasters’ desire for the “next big thing” is as strong now as it ever was in happier economic times.

MOVING on to another economic mystery — why are the BRIC countries, the next wave of economic superpowers, still so insignificant in the international TV market?

I would say our sales to, for example, the Netherlands (population: 16 million) have been more valuable to us over the past five years than total sales to Brazil, Russia, India and China (combined population: 2.8 billion).

But this is surely going to change, and quickly. There is compelling evidence that the new, educated middle classes in the BRIC countries crave quality science and history programs rather than imported low-quality shows. With this in mind, it is little wonder that factual giants such as Discovery are taking such interest in the emerging markets. We looked at factual initiatives in both China and India when under corporate ownership, but nothing came of it. Looking back, this is a relief — I think this is one of those things when getting in first is not always best. Clearly, working in China or India presents a much greater challenge than expanding in North America or Europe. Others may try and fail, but sooner or later someone will crack it. I don’t anticipate opening up our Rio office just yet, but then again the FIFA World Cup is in Brazil in just over two years...

WE indie producers working the international market have our nomadic rituals: Washington in January, Cannes in April, then Sheffield and possibly La Rochelle, Edinburgh and then back to Cannes and finally, as we end the year, the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers. Throw in a few film festivals and a couple of jollies and it would be easy to give up the day job, although there would be the minor problem of having no commissions.

Admittedly, the date in the annual ritual I most look forward to is the Science Congress, mainly because it remains the only gathering where ideas are debated, rather than deals done. It’s somewhere you can have a good row as well as a laugh, especially if C4 science commissioner David Glover is doing one of his turns. It’s where you can do high quality networking (much of it sober). We are, of course, much more interested in the debate than the venues, but having said that there have been some pretty memorable locations. Recent hosts Dresden, Melbourne and Florence have all worked well, but for me, and I suspect many others, Tokyo was the ultimate Congress experience. As they said of Woodstock, if you can remember it you weren’t there.

The woman with one of the toughest jobs on the circuit is Congress editorial director Alison Leigh. She has to wrangle with indie egos, feuding broadcasters and the predictable, mostly friendly, national rivalries. Miraculously, she deals with this toxic brew, keeps egos soothed, and manages to pull out a consistently cracking program. I’m sure Paris, not exactly an undesirable venue, will do us proud this year. Long may it prosper.

“Pointed Arrow” is a new column from John Smithson, creative director of Arrow Media, a new indie he co-founded this year. Previously he was chief executive of Darlow Smithson Productions. ■■

MOVES AT NAT GEO, C4, DISCOVERY



Owens



Liguori

A trio of major executive moves hit the headlines late in the day as *realscreen* went to press in November, majorly impacting the non-fiction sector as it heads into 2012.

Firstly, at National Geographic Channels U.S., Reveille founding partner Howard T. Owens was appointed as president, replacing Steve Schiffman, who has been with Nat Geo since 2002.

Owens will report to David Lyle, CEO of National Geographic Channels U.S. and global programming, and will oversee the programming, development, communications, research and business affairs units at the company’s U.S. networks, while also working closely on the strategic business efforts of its ad sales and affiliate teams.

Off the back of that announcement came the news that Discovery Communications was bidding farewell to its chief operating officer, Peter Liguori, who will leave the firm at the end of this year, with the company eliminating the COO role following his departure.

During his nearly two years with the company, Liguori was responsible for overseeing the launches of Discovery’s joint ventures OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network, The Hub and 3net. Discovery Communications president and CEO David Zaslav paid tribute to Liguori’s “leadership, enthusiasm and creative vision,” which he said “brought a fresh and important perspective to Discovery.”

Finally, at Channel 4 in the UK, head of documentaries Hamish Mykura confirmed reports that he would be departing the network he has called home for the past 10 years. Mykura will serve until the year-end, with his exit creating a gap for one of the biggest jobs in the UK non-fiction TV industry.

There is no word yet on his replacement, although it has been suggested that head of specialist factual Ralph Lee will assume control of the docs department in a new role. **Adam Benzine ■■**

CHARLOTTE COOK HEADS TO HOT DOCS

BY ADAM BENZINE

Canadian festival Hot Docs has hired Charlotte Cook, a former BBC 'Storyville' exec and Edinburgh Film Festival programmer, to be its new director of programming.

Cook joins Hot Docs from the Frontline Club in London, England, where she has been the head of film programming for the past two years, overseeing a program that showcased more than 100 documentaries each year.

She replaces previous director of programming Sean Farnel, who left the festival in June after six years in the role.

In her new role, Cook will be responsible for developing the programming vision for North America's biggest documentary festival, taking charge of a slate that last year saw more than 200 non-fiction titles playing over 10 days in Toronto.

"We had a number of interesting applicants for the role," Hot Docs executive director Chris McDonald told *realscreen*. "Commissioners, festival directors, programmers... but Charlotte had great energy, lots of ideas, and a solid reputation as a curator.

For her part, Cook said that while the festival was already well known for promoting new talent, one of her key objectives was to help develop it into "a conduit for preserving past documentary" material.

"I really hope we can be something that not only looks to brand new documentaries, but also looks to past documentary and helps get things back into the public domain," she said.

Cook will manage a programming team that includes Lynne Fernie,



Sarafina LeFelice, Heather Haynes and Lynne Crocker. Karina Rotenstein, after four years as programming manager, announced her departure from the festival shortly after the news of Cook's appointment was revealed. LeFelice, previously an associate programmer, will replace her.

McDonald added that, with the notable exception of IDFA director Ally Derks, "festival programming can be a very male-dominated space, and I like that fact that we'll have a female perspective on things."

Prior to serving at the Frontline Club, Cook worked with the Edinburgh International Film Festival, where she programmed the specialist strand 'Conflict | Reportage' and managed several events; and was also a strand coordinator at BBC 'Storyville.'

Cook will relocate to Toronto in December, following the run of festivals and events through the fall.

The 19th annual Hot Docs festival takes place next year from April 26 to May 6. ■■

▶▶ BEST PRACTICES

business tips from the pros

BY CHRIS PALMER & ANGELI GABRIEL

HOW TO MANAGE AND REDUCE STRESS

Some stress in your life is good. You want to feel challenged, alive, and striving for excellence. But here we're talking about stress that leaves you despondent, enervated, and even phlegmatic—the very opposite of the way you want to feel.

In order to manage stress, you must first pinpoint the things that are creating it. This is crucial in directing your efforts to most effectively reducing the amount of stress in your life. In fact, you might be surprised to find out what exactly is causing your stress.

For instance, work is a common source of stress. However, dig a little deeper and ask what specifically about work causes stress? Is it the amount of work? Is it your relationships with bosses and co-workers? Is the work itself unfulfilling? If questions like these aren't asked, then you risk misdirecting your time and energy toward unsuccessful ends—which can create additional stress. By first identifying specifically what causes stress at work or in any other aspect of life, you can take action to more precisely and effectively eliminate that stressor.

Stress in your job can be reduced by keeping two principles in mind. First of all, try to focus on things that are important, rather than urgent. Urgent yet unimportant tasks that come up throughout the day can easily cause you to veer off-track from your most important goals. Keep in mind that unimportant, urgent matters (for example, interruptions, gossip, some meetings and phone calls, and other people's minor issues) should rarely be given priority over important yet not urgent matters (for example, preventing crises, getting feedback, building relationships, planning, preparation, reflection, learning, personal development, and seizing new opportunities). In this way, you can more easily focus on reaching your goals while eliminating distractions and stress.

Second, try to devote your professional life to a cause you care about. Having your heart in your work makes a world of difference in the amount of effort, time, and energy you put into it. When you spend hours of every workday in a field for which you have no passion, then you can become resentful, harassed, and anxious. Pursue work, if you can, in a field that is meaningful to you, because every minute you spend doing it will help reduce stress.

In order to reduce stress in your personal life, you must take care of yourself physically, socially, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and financially. You can only take on daily challenges if you are physically healthy. Your social and emotional well-being will give you the strength and confidence to overcome stressful setbacks. Meanwhile, taking care of your mental and spiritual health will eliminate some of the typical causes of stress and provide you a foundation upon which you can grow.

A fulfilling and meaningful life is what most of us hope to achieve. This can only happen if we learn to face the stressful challenges that arise at work and at home in a healthy, constructive, and effective way. By identifying the specific causes of our negative stress and then appropriately addressing each one, we can manage and reduce stress in a way that will lead us ever closer to reaching personal and professional fulfillment.

Chris Palmer is the director of American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and author of the Sierra Club book "Shooting in the Wild: An Insider's Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom." Angeli Gabriel is an anthropologist, filmmaker, and MA candidate at American University. ■



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BY ADAM BENZINE

TOUCHING THE VOID

With his latest documentary *Into The Abyss* receiving raves after its September world premiere, acclaimed director Werner Herzog talks to *realscreen* about the creation of the dark project, explaining how the film evolved beyond its basic premise of personal conversations with Death Row inmates to become an existential think piece.



At the age of 69, Werner Herzog is on one hell of a hot streak.

After hitting box office gold with last year's 3D extravaganza, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, his latest effort, *Into the Abyss*, is now picking up buzz on the festival circuit and winning rave reviews. He has even landed a major on-screen role in a Hollywood blockbuster, being tapped to play the bad guy opposite Tom Cruise in the upcoming feature *One Shot*, in what should amount to a remarkable casting choice.

At present though, the German director's key focus is on *Abyss*, which had its world premiere in September at the Telluride and Toronto international film festivals.

The 105-minute documentary is built around conversations in Texas with Death Row inmates Jason Burkett and Michael Perry – the latter of whom was executed just eight days after Herzog met with him – as well as interviews with an assortment of related characters, including the wife of one of the murderers, the guard charged with overseeing the lethal injection process, and family members of the murder victims.

“ There was always a sense that the issue had to come up again, and now it’s a big time debate in the U.S. ”

The film's premiere came right as the thorny issue of capital punishment was once again thrust onto the news agenda in America, with the decision by Texas governor and U.S. presidential hopeful Rick Perry to deny clemency to condemned convict Troy Davis giving Herzog's doc a fresh urgency.

“There was always a sense that the issue had to come up again,” says Herzog, talking to *realscreen* on a sunny hotel patio in Cannes, “and all of a sudden it's a big time debate in the United States. I have always made my position clear to audiences – to the inmates, to the warden and everyone – that I'm not an advocate of capital punishment.

“However, it's not an activist's film against [it],

because I cannot vote in the United States. I'm saying, ‘I respectfully disagree with the practice of capital punishment.’ And I do disagree.”

Herzog says that when he was 16, he pursued and ultimately abandoned the idea of doing a project in a maximum security prison in Bavaria, and as such the idea of revisiting the issue of crime and punishment “has been dormant” for some time.

“It somehow got a push because one person who interested me was facing execution in only eight days,” he explains. “However, it was quite clear that the film should be much more than just Death Row inmates; I was also fascinated by the side of the families of victims of violent crime. The film is dedicated to them.

“And I was fascinated by the fact that somebody has to do the executions, so I spoke with the prison guard who would strap you to the gurney for the lethal injection and who, after 125 executions, had a breakdown and cannot do it anymore.”

During its development, Herzog's project – coproduced by Creative Differences, Skellig Rock, Spring Films and Werner Herzog Film – shifted through a number of different forms and guises, taking on various titles along the way, including *Gazing into the Abyss* and *Werner Herzog's Final Confessions*. It eventually settled into two distinct entities: the feature film called *Into the Abyss*, and a four-part television series called *Death Row*, the latter of which promises to be a less existential affair.

U.S. net Investigation Discovery (ID) and UK channel More4 backed *Abyss*, along with theatrical firms IFC and Revolver, with ID also committing to air *Death Row*. ZDF Enterprises is handling TV distribution for both projects, and will launch *Death Row* at MIPTV, having launched *Abyss* at MIPCOM in October.

Convicted murderer Michael Perry, who was executed eight days after meeting with Herzog



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While they both sprang from the same source, Herzog says there will be “a clear distinction” between the two productions, with the theatrical film featuring “a big tapestry of events around a sort of gothic America, and a look into the deep recesses of the human soul, going way beyond the crime and the perpetrators, going way beyond capital punishment,” he explains.

As such, Herzog chose the title *Into the Abyss* to illustrate that the film’s subject matter extended beyond Death Row. “Wherever you look, there is another abyss,” he says. “Even among the families of the victims, it’s almost abysmal what you are witnessing there. And I gave it a secondary title: *A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life*, because the entire last chapter of the film is about the urgency of life. All of a sudden the wife of one of the perpetrators is pregnant by him. How do they do that? There must be an enormous urgency of life which goes beyond crime and punishment.”

The biggest challenge in making the film, says the director, was access, with several subjects understandably reluctant to talk on camera about such a sensitive and divisive topic. “Some of them flatly refused, which is fine,” he says. “Then with the others, you have to have a permit from them in writing to talk to you. Then you have to have the permit from the warden, who – without giving you any reason – can deny you access.

“And, of course, you better have an understanding with the attorneys that you are not going to damage the chances of their clients in their appeal procedures. It happened

“ Even among the families of the victims, it’s almost abysmal what you’re witnessing. ”

in one case; an attorney said, ‘Please don’t do it, because my client has a tendency to say stupid things on camera in interviews, and it may damage his chances in court.’ I said, ‘This project is hereby cancelled!’ I cancelled it only 36 hours before I was due to be shooting.”

The critical reception to *Abyss* has been extremely positive, and the film is already



Charles Richardson, older brother of murder victim Jeremy Richardson

gaining heat on the awards trail, having picked up the best documentary prize at the 55th BFI London Film Festival in October.

Its release sees it following an extremely successful predecessor. As Herzog’s first foray into 3D, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* has raked in more than US\$5.2 million in ticket sales to date, putting in one of the best theatrical

and buy a ticket to see a film like that, for God’s sake? Yes, that’s quite an uphill battle.

“But I always had the feeling this film would connect with audiences and it actually really connected,” he says. “It’s not because the film is in 3D – maybe that’s part of it, but it’s about looking into the deepest, darkest recesses of history or prehistory and asking, ‘Where do we originate from? What motivates human beings to create art and culture?’”

But while *Dreams* is still doing good business theatrically, it will have to come down from some screens to make way for *Abyss*. Given the word of mouth surrounding the doc thus far and the resurgence of debate around capital punishment, the filmmaker leaned on distributor IFC/Sundance Selects to bring forward its theatrical release date, scrapping a planned launch next year and instead releasing it on November 11, 2011, which will put it in contention for the coming Oscars.

“Although that means it’s going into the Christmas season,” Herzog says with a smile, “and this is the last film you want to see in a Christmas mood!” ■

performances by a documentary in North America this year.

“It’s strange,” Herzog says with a chuckle. “No one would have predicted it because it’s about Palaeolithic people doing paintings and art 32,000 years ago. A French cave with French scientists who speak French, filmed by a Bavarian. Who in the United States would rush



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THE **WAR** THEY SAW

Following up 2009's Emmy-winning *WWII in HD*, History premiered the six-hour *Vietnam in HD* in November, bringing never-before-seen footage of what was called “the first television war,” some of it shot by veterans themselves, to light.

BY BARRY WALSH

In 1969, writer and TV critic Michael Arlen published a collection of essays about the impact that televised reports from the Vietnam War had on the American populace. It was titled *The Living Room War*, a phrase that would effectively encapsulate the war's status as the first conflict to receive such in-depth TV coverage.

The living room war brought its share of horrifying moments to the folks at home, such as Morley Safer's 1965 report for CBS that depicted Marines setting aflame thatched roofs of huts in Cam Ne village, or the infamous execution of a Viet Cong prisoner by South Vietnamese General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, captured by an NBC cameraman and an AP photog. Over the course of the war, the tone of coverage changed considerably, just as the mood of the American public did regarding the conflict. But while the

news organizations had cameras trained to tell the story, so too did some of the soldiers.

Vietnam in HD, which aired on History in the U.S. in November and is being distributed internationally by A+E Networks as *Vietnam: Lost Films*, brings many of those soldiers' stories to light. The six-hour series, produced by Lou Reda Productions, documents the Vietnam War in a similar fashion as the prodco's 2009 series, *WWII in HD*, also for History. For both series, thousands of hours of uncensored footage were combed through to find clips that would detail every critical component of the conflicts and, once found, those clips were then upgraded to HD and edited to provide the narrative.

“It seemed to us that the Vietnam War, in a larger sense, from the beginning to the end of the war, had not had a really comprehensive treatment on television since

the PBS documentary [1983's *Vietnam: A Television History*],” says Susan Werbe, executive producer for History of *Vietnam in HD* and VP of programming for the net. “The war was very controversial, people turned against it, and in some sense, we didn't separate the war from the warriors. So this was an opportunity, in the same style that Lou Reda Productions developed for *WWII in HD*, to tell the story of Vietnam through the veterans' experience, and to give them their due.”

The six-hour series culled 8mm and Super 8mm film from over 100 different sources, featuring footage shot by veterans at various points during the conflict (Photo: History)





Close to 1,000 hours of footage were combed through to find clips that would provide a narrative covering the war's crucial battles (Photo: History)



Vietnam vet contacts helped Lou Reda Productions locate other veterans interested in taking part in the series (Photo: History)

Liz Reph, lead writer for the series and a producer at Lou Reda Productions, says the company gathered about 1,000 hours of footage for the series from various sources, including the National Archives, the Marine Corps Historical Center, the Army Heritage Museum and assorted Air Force museums. However, a good percentage – Reph estimates up to a third – came from the vets themselves.

"We were able to gather up well over 100 different sources of footage including 8mm or Super 8mm film that veterans filmed themselves while they were in Vietnam, while they were on R&R, or while they were home before or after they left for service," says Reph.

"I think it's very interesting to see the moments the soldiers themselves chose to film," she adds. "That speaks to what Vietnam was for them – the moments where they're with their buddies, or they're in combat with the people they're fighting next to, or they're being regular 19-and 20-year-old kids hanging out on leave. You're not seeing it through what the news cameras chose to film."

Outside vendors transferred some of the film, while Lou Reda Productions' in-house archive facilities took care of the 8mm, Super 8 and 16mm footage, using film scanners for frame-by-frame conversion.

While viewers will see some of the iconic moments from TV reports that they may recall being transfixed by at the time, they will also see moments that will undoubtedly bring the

war home in a new way, wedded to first-person accounts from 13 individuals whose lives were forever changed by the conflict.

Recommendations for participants came from Lou Reda Productions' various military contacts, the Library of Congress, and other veterans, says Reph. Those taking part include Karl Marlantes, a Marine whose unit engaged in battles in the A Shau and Da Krong Valleys and who later penned the 2010 novel *Matterhorn*; and Barry Romo, a Bronze Star-awarded infantryman who later joined the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Also featured in the series are Anne Purcell, a military wife whose husband,

from interviews conducted with the 13, in a technique similar to that used in *WWII in HD*. Michael C. Hall (*Dexter*) narrates.

As part of the community outreach for the series, History is also joining with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's Call for Photos, an initiative to collect photographs of each of the 58,272 men and women whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington. The network hosted a series of events in New York City, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Chicago to advance the collection of the more than 35,000 photos still needed.

Werbe and Reph say that like the Call for Photos project, *Vietnam in HD* aims to bring to

“The war was very controversial, and in some sense we didn't separate the war from the warriors.”

Benjamin, was a POW for five years; and Joe Galloway, war reporter for UPI who also received a Bronze Star for rescuing wounded soldiers at the battle of Ia Drang.

First-person interviews with the 13 featured individuals are intertwined with the footage, while assorted celebrities such as Adrian Grenier, Blair Underwood and Jennifer Love-Hewitt also provide voice-overs, scripted

light the faces behind the stories for present and future generations.

The series' tagline, "It's not the war we know, it's the war they fought" effectively sums up the aim of *Vietnam in HD*'s producers, says Werbe, in "letting the veterans tell their stories, and giving a new generation of viewers the history of this war. It's part of the legacy of this country." ■

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SPRING IS **ON** THE AIR

As 2011 draws to a close, the “Arab Spring” that has seen protests, death and revolutions spread across the Middle East shows no sign of abating. Here, *realscreen* looks at several of the documentaries and documentary makers emerging from the turmoil in four Middle Eastern countries affected by the uprisings.

BY KELLY ANDERSON AND ADAM BENZINE



Reporter Ramita Navai with defectors from the Syrian military

With governments overthrown in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt; sustained civil disorder in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Jordan; and major protests in territories including Algeria and Iraq, the Arab Spring that began late in 2010 and carried throughout this year has left a momentous and indelible mark on the structure of the Middle East.

Throughout the year, reporters, photographers and documentarians from both the West and the Middle East have been on the ground in a variety of countries, embedding themselves with protesting forces or fighters, and trying to make sense of the fog of war, amid what are often uncertain circumstances.

The results of these efforts have made for some remarkable factual programming, ranging from Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill's Oscar-shortlisted Egyptian doc *In Tahrir Square*, to Wael Dabbous's Syrian effort *Undercover Syria*.

Here, *realscreen* talks to filmmakers covering four key territories in the Middle East, to examine how they have documented the uprisings.

SYRIA

The uprising in Syria has proven to be one of the more difficult for Western reporters and documentarians to cover, thanks largely to the issue of getting access to the country.

So far only a handful of Western filmmakers have managed to sneak in. Among them, Sue Lloyd-Roberts, from the BBC's current affairs strand 'Newsnight,' managed to get herself smuggled into Homs — home to some of Syria's strongest anti-government protests — to document the situation there.

Also gaining access were director Wael Dabbous and reporter Ramita Navai, who produced *Undercover Syria*, a Channel 4 film which aired in the network's 'Unreported World' strand in October, before playing in the U.S. on PBS 'Frontline' in November.

According to Navai, journalists are “itching to get in” to the country, but gaining entrance remains the biggest hurdle for Westerners. She and director Dabbous managed to make it through by applying for tourist visas, a plan they thought would have little chance of success.

“I think it helps that I'm Middle Eastern and the director-cameraman is originally Lebanese, so it was good cover,” she says. “We were a rich, Middle Eastern couple on holiday, and they fell for it.”

Once within the country, other problems presented themselves. “The hardest thing was just getting the camera out, just filming,” Navai explains. “Before I went I spoke to a photojournalist who'd been there weeks before I was due to go, and he had said he'd taken a really nice camera and he couldn't get it out because he was so scared — he only took photos with his iPhone.

“Everyone is very, very paranoid and very cautious,” she adds. “There are informants everywhere, so we went in with a really small camera and were really careful. If we got caught with any of the activists, they would've been imprisoned and tortured, and maybe killed. That was my biggest worry.” **Adam Benzine**

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TV TALK FOR TOUGH TIMES:

In times of economic turbulence, the Almighty Dollar has to be a lot more flexible, whether you're a cost-conscious commissioning exec or a producer looking to wring the most out of the allotted budget. But besides flexibility, creativity is also part of the equation as new models of financing and remuneration are emerging. Hear from a panel of senior execs representing the network, production and distribution sides of the equation to find out how those in the TV business can skillfully ride the economic rollercoaster.

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When it comes to the rights issue – retaining rights on a project or working for hire – there are different trains of thought. When is it worth it to “fight for your rights” and when does it make more business sense to just cash the check? Here, distributors, network execs and producers from both sides of the divide offer their input on what is always a hot-button topic, with an eye towards how savvy producers can both build relationships with networks and build their businesses at the same time.

FROM SIZZLE TO SHOW:

This session offers a peek “behind the curtain” to show the sizzle tapes behind some of the biggest non-fiction hits on the air today. Which sizzles popped from the start, and which ones showed just enough promise to secure another meeting? This panel will offer an entertaining and informative look at the art and science behind sizzles, and the development process itself.

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Cameras were rolling from the beginning of the Libyan uprising

LIBYA

The uprising in Libya is the timeliest among the Middle Eastern rebellions, with the death of ruler Muammar Gaddafi on October 20 making headlines around the world.

The revolution to depose Gaddafi began after neighboring countries Egypt and Tunisia saw homegrown protests, and cameras were rolling from the very beginning of the unrest.

Behind one of those cameras was documentarian Tim Hetherington, who was killed in April covering the conflict in Libya between rebels and forces loyal to Gaddafi. The filmmaker, best known for the Oscar-nominated doc *Restrepo*, will now be the subject of *Tim Hetherington: His Life and His Work*, a one-off documentary for HBO being made by friend and *Restrepo* co-director Sebastian Junger. The special, which includes footage from Libya, will air on April 20, 2012, the first anniversary of Hetherington's death.

Meanwhile, in the UK, Current TV will air *For the Love of Libya* on New Year's Eve. Lina Prestwood, Current TV's director of content, commissioned

Moonbeam Films to produce the one-hour doc, which tells the story of Libya's uprising through the voices of young British Libyans.

EP Anne Reeve, and directors Chris Walker and James Reeve, had already been on the ground speaking with the main characters: two English Libyans who set up the first rebel radio station in Benghazi; a young British Libyan man who started the country's first glossy English-language magazine; and a young woman and her friend who are starting a fashion business in Tripoli.

"The people in the film are the people on the ground and whose tweets [have been] imperative to reporting from the inside," says Prestwood. "[They're] very much this new generation of young Libyans. It's a dawn of a new democratic Libya, and they and their businesses represent that.

"The revolution is only the beginning of the story," she adds. "For us, that's a big point of difference. It's not an easy thing to start a new democracy and we want to document that as it is happening." **Kelly Anderson**

IRAN

If ever there was a year that Iran closed its doors to the international documentary community, 2011 was it.

Things weren't always this way — as recently as 2008, the government-backed Cinema Vérité - Iran International Documentary Film Festival opened its doors to the West, welcoming execs from organizations such as BBC 'Storyville,' ARTE France, Hot Docs and Finland's YLE to Tehran, to network and screen films.

But following the 2009 Green Wave election protests and uprising, the country has clamped down on filmmakers, while also conducting a very public spat with the BBC.

Nevertheless, Iranian filmmakers are continuing to produce films, with one of the most notable works to come out of the country this year being *This Is Not a Film*, a documentary shot by Jafar Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb.

The doc depicts Panahi's life under house arrest while awaiting the result of his appeal of a six-year prison sentence and 20-year ban on filmmaking for committing "propaganda" against the Iranian regime. Panahi shot the film on an iPhone with the help of Mirtahmasb and smuggled it out of the country on a USB stick hidden in a cake. The effort had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May, and its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival four months later.

Following its release, Iranian authorities clamped down even harder on the filmmakers in the country, arresting a further six documentarians — including Mirtahmasb — whose films had appeared on the BBC's Persian feed.



Jafar Panahi in *This Is Not a Film*.

The arrests notably also came shortly after BBC Persian broadcast a documentary deemed unflattering to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader — during which the Iranian government attempted to block the BBC's signal in the country — and the imprisoned filmmakers were accused by Iran's minister of intelligence of being "collaborators with the BBC in Iran."

The international filmmaking community has rallied behind the Iranian filmmakers, with statements from a range of Hollywood stars, unions and organizations urging for their release. As of press time, two of them — Naser Safarian and Mahsen Shahrnazdar — have been released, with the other four still imprisoned. **AB**



The Good, The Bad and the Politician

EGYPT

Downtown Cairo's major public space, Tahrir Square, became the focal point for the Egyptian revolution in the early part of 2011. Aided by Twitter and Facebook, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gathered there to protest against former president Hosni Mubarak, who stepped down in February.

Almost a year later, multiple documentaries, often using "Tahrir" in their titles, have been released, using material compiled by the media tent that was erected onsite at the Square to collect footage from the demonstrators.

Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill's *In Tahrir Square: 18 Days of Egypt's Unfinished Revolution* has already received Oscar notice, having been selected as one of the eight shortlisted contenders for the 84th Academy Awards' best documentary short subject category.

Meanwhile, French/Italian documentary *Tahrir: Liberation Square* followed director Stefano Savona as he spent 18 days in Cairo, blending into the crowd at Tahrir Square and capturing everything along the way. His film screened at the New York Film Festival, and it has been selected as the closing film at the Montreal International Documentary Festival (RIDM) on November 19.

Current TV will have the UK premiere of Ruairidh Arrow's feature doc *How to Start a Revolution*, airing on New Year's Eve, which features American political scientist Gene Sharp, whose writings have been the guide for various non-violent revolutions and are credited with inspiring those in Tahrir Square. Current's Lina Prestwood says the doc "effectively explains how every revolution we've seen this year [with] the whole Arab Spring [happened]."

Showing at IDFA's Best of the Fest section, meanwhile, is a three-part take on the Egyptian uprising, *Tahrir 2011: The Good, The Bad and the Politician*. Made by three different Cairo-based filmmakers — Tamar Ezzat, Ayten Amin and Amr Salama — each film tells different stories relating to the revolution.

Ezzat's *The Good* documents some of the individuals who took part while Samara's *The Politician* examines the psyche of Mubarak with a satirical segment, "10 Steps to Becoming a Dictator." Amin's *The Bad* focuses on the police officers and security forces, to get their P.O.V.

"The most important thing that happened for me in those 18 days was there was a spirit in the country that I've never experienced before," says Amin. "This is the thing that I want people to feel because it was remarkable." **KA ■■**



BY ANDY DEHNART

REALITY'S YEAR THAT WAS

In a year that gave Discovery's *Deadliest Catch* its first — and long overdue — Emmy for outstanding reality series, unscripted TV found a lot of life and realism in unexpected places and familiar formats. Even as network TV seems to rely more on scripted from September to May, there's some truly excellent work being done on cable. The budgets may be smaller, but the stories are powerful and compelling.

Oprah exited daytime TV this year, but all of the build-up over her departure wasn't nearly as interesting as the documentary series on OWN chronicling the last year of her show. While OWN's *Your OWN Show*, a competition series offering its winner a TV show on the network, failed to live up to the standards set by other similar shows, *Season 25: Oprah Behind the Scenes* took viewers places they'd never been. It introduced us to the people who helped make Oprah a success every day, the producers of her TV show, and they were this reality series' true stars. The worst part about the show was that it only followed their work over a single season.

As the year began, it seemed like the singing competition format may have played itself out. But even though they presided over a show that hadn't changed much, Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler managed to inject life into *American Idol*.

NBC's *The Voice* changed up the formula with its focus on raw talent and expert advice rather than manufactured drama — and there were swiveling chairs, too. By recruiting currently popular singers — Christina Aguilera, Cee Lo Green, Adam Levine, and Blake Shelton — as judges, the show both attracted viewers and gave itself credibility, although it did that even more by avoiding the typical tropes of the genre, such as the parade of awful auditions.

But it was Oxygen's *The Glee Project* that really surprised as it searched for a new cast member for the Fox musical drama. With its cast of exceptional teenagers and 20-somethings, all of who seemed to have come from an alternate universe where searching for fame via reality TV didn't exist, the show had a surprising emotional center that made it easily one of the best competitions on cable. Ironically, watching them sing for their lives in front of *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy was more consistently entertaining than the show he was casting them for.

History's *Top Shot* also proved that a familiar show structure can seem fresh. Hosted by former "Survivor" Colby Donaldson, the competition gave marksmen the chance to hit targets with different kinds of weapons — from rocks to cannons — and was in many ways a throwback to old-school reality television. Its combination of talent and technique was what really made it succeed — especially the talent of the show's crew, which assembles fun-to-watch challenges while capturing unbelievable slow-motion shots of bullets destroying targets.

Plenty of other series continued to offer great entertainment based in authentic reality, such as A&E's *Hoarders*, Bravo's *Flipping Out*, Discovery's *Dirty Jobs*, and Animal Planet's *Whale Wars*. And there were lots of competition series worth watching, from Syfy's new *Face-Off* to Bravo's *Top Chef: All-Stars*.

There's still fight left in older formulas, too. Take CBS' *Survivor*, which is having a creatively strong fall season, growing its ratings against tough competition. That it's survived all these years tells us something about the power of high-quality production, a solid formula, and great storytelling.

Andy Dehnart edits realityblurred.com and teaches writing and journalism at Stetson University in Deland, Fla. ■

REALSCREEN'S BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT FORUM 2011

In October, *realscreen* returned to New York City for the second annual edition of our Branded Entertainment Forum. The day was full of case studies and panel discussions featuring stakeholders in the space, from networks and producers to client marketers. Thanks go out to the delegates on hand and to our advisory board, chaired by OgilvyEntertainment's **Doug Scott**, and co-chaired by Sundance Channel/IFC tv president **Evan Shapiro** and @radical.media president of media and entertainment **Robert Friedman**. (Photos: Donald Bowers/Getty Images)



a Robert Friedman, @radical.media's president of media and entertainment, with company founder Jon Kamen **b** Christie Kawata, SVP, strategic marketing science, The Nielsen Company
c Tony G. Weisman, president of Digitas, Boston-Chicago-Detroit region **d** Evan Shapiro, president of Sundance Channel and IFCtv **e** Jocelyn Egan, SVP Discovery Solutions
f Tony Chapman, Capital C partner/CEO, with Michelle Klein, VP Smirnoff global marketing communications, Diageo **g** Filmmaker Casey Neistat discusses Jeremiah Weed's "Everyday Badass"
h Frank Cooper III, PepsiCo's CMO, global consumer engagement **i** Peter Naylor, EVP digital media sales, NBCUniversal **j** François Florentiny, managing director for ITV Studios France
k Mary Lisio, SVP non-fiction and branded entertainment, Scott Free Productions **l** Lunch networking, with Kevin McAuliffe, VP branded entertainment group, NBCUniversal Cable Ent. (center)

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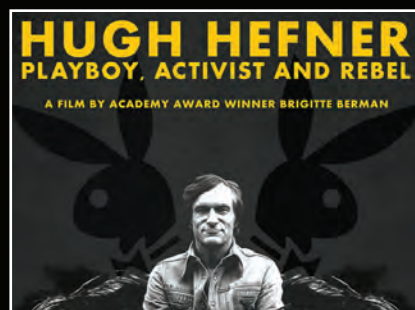
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FACTUAL FLASH

Whether it's to recreate history or to bring abstract scientific concepts to life, cutting-edge CGI and awesome animation are making more of an impact on factual programming than ever. Here, *realscreen* looks at three projects bringing flash to factual.

► *THE FABRIC OF THE COSMOS* (PBS 'NOVA') ► PIXELDUST STUDIOS

As the VFX studio tasked with bringing the concepts within physicist Brian Greene's book *The Fabric of the Cosmos* to a television audience via a 'Nova' four-part series of the same name, Washington- and New York-based Pixeldust had its work cut out. Nineteen months worth of work, in fact.

Ricardo Andrade, founder and executive creative director at Pixeldust, says it took close to a year of the 19 months to flesh out the ideas behind the 1,000-plus animations and visual effects created by the studio for the project. Every single shot had to be storyboarded first and then run past Greene for feedback. Indeed, Greene's input was so comprehensive that a database had to be created to track all the feedback for particular shots.

"There were some things that were approved on the first round, while some others were approved on the 20th round," explains Andrade. "Brian Greene was putting his stamp on the show and endorsing it, and he wouldn't want to risk his entire career on a mistake. He didn't compromise and neither did we."

The VFX team – 22 at full-strength – was responsible for conveying some of the trickier theories in Greene's treatise, such as the existence of a "multiverse" (of which our universe is but one component) and the relationship between space and time, with visual metaphors. And if the VFX treatments lost something in translation between Greene's text and the workstation, it would mean going back to the source.

"As animators, we have to understand what it is we'll be illustrating," Andrade says. "If [our] animators turned around something that didn't make sense, they'd have to read the portions of the book some more to understand."

"We created a ton of style frames, and there was a lot of stuff that wound up on the cutting room floor because he might've thought the concepts were a little blurry."

Still, there was room for the odd bit of artistic license. Andrade cites *The Quantum Club* as one of his favorite segments of the series. In that sequence, Greene visits a digitally-created environment meant to illustrate some of the more

mind-boggling aspects of quantum physics. For example, when Greene takes a shot on one of the club's pool tables, the balls on an adjacent table shoot off. The club's patrons are equally hard to pin down.

"When he goes into the Quantum Club, the people [there] represent particles," explains Andrade. "They're all acting erratically, because there is no predictability in the quantum world, in contrast to the Newtonian world."

That segment, while fun to craft, was also one of the more labor-intensive, requiring motion control cameras and a four-day green screen shoot with about eight to 10 actors, and then compositing multiple layers of footage to create a hotspot where people are particles, and unpredictable ones at that.

"It was a long process but it was fun," sums up Andrade. "With projects like this you have to be careful to make sure that from beginning to end you have the same level of quality and consistency of entertainment throughout."

Barry Walsh ■■

Physicist Brian Greene comes face to face with a parallel Brian Greene, courtesy of Pixeldust



▶ THE CITY BENEATH THE WAVES: PAVLOPETRI (BBC2) ▶ PRIME FOCUS



Prime Focus reimaged the ancient city of Pavlopetri through 3D maps of the seabed and shards of artifacts

BBC2's history program *City Beneath the Waves: Pavlopetri*, which aired this past October, brought viewers to the first ever excavation of what is believed to be the oldest submerged city in the world, discovered more than 40 years ago off the coast of Greece. The special also teamed top underwater archaeologists, led by Dr. Jon Henderson, with the broadcast VFX

team from the London office of Prime Focus, led by creative director Simon Clarke, to reveal the 3,500-year-old secrets of the ancient city hidden by the seabed.

"Typically, archaeological programs can be quite dull," admits Clarke. "The whole intention of this project was to embrace new technology and perhaps create something that would hopefully become a bit of a legacy for the historical site."

Part of that new technology came from a team of specialists from the Australian Centre for Field Robotics, which provided an aquatic robot that took stereoscopic images of the sea floor. Those were then given to the Prime Focus team, which would feed the data and imagery into its own software, in order to render into 3D a map of the seabed floor upon which the digital reconstruction was based.

Artifacts found on the seabed and other areas on location were then scanned by the team with digital laser scanners to create 3D models, which were then wedded to the

pieces' actual textures and glazes.

Using Maya for modeling and Nuke and After Effects for compositing, the team, in collaboration with the archaeologists, digitally rebuilt the Bronze Age city; in some cases, brick by brick. But given the tight turnaround – five or six weeks according to Clarke – time was of the essence.

"We had a couple of guys on the team who were writing scripts and codes to automate the building of the structures so we wouldn't have to hand-animate every brick coming into position," he recalls.

The collaboration between the archaeologists and the VFX team took place both behind the scenes and in front of the camera. Clarke says the constant interplay between the teams ensured a far more accurate end result.

"Often, in the work we do, the liaisons are with directors or producers and the information or research is often filtered through them," says Clarke. "But here we could ask direct, specific questions." **BW**

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► **TITANOBOA: MONSTER SNAKE (SMITHSONIAN)** ► MOKKO STUDIO, JELLYFISH PICTURES, WIDE-EYED ENTERTAINMENT



VFX shops in the UK and Canada took on the challenge of recreating the prehistoric Titanoboa

Recreating a number of super-sized creatures, including 48-foot long snakes, might seem the domain of horror films' special effects shops, but with the upcoming *Titanoboa: Monster Snake*, that was the task for Montreal-based Mokko Studio, and in London, VFX shop Jellyfish Pictures and Wide-Eyed Entertainment's in-house CGI department.

The international coproduction from London-based Wide-Eyed Entertainment and Toronto's yap films split the CGI jobs between the three studios for the two-hour documentary special.

Titanoboa: Monster Snake uses a mix of live action and CGI to tell the story behind 60 million-year-old fossils recently discovered in a Colombian mine, and gave the CGI/VFX houses the major challenge of recreating the massive creatures with 100% accuracy while also depicting the sheer scale of it.

"Here we've got a world where they've found giant turtles, giant snakes, giant crocodiles, and it's very easy [for the] mind to not see it as big as it really is," says Wide-Eyed CEO Jasper James, who served as the project's executive producer.

To create the monstrous snakes, models were generated based on the discovery of the vertebrae, with the aid of paleontologists and modern snake experts. The modeling and some of the CGI and live action shots were taken care of in the UK, and once the models

were generated, they were sent to Canada where the full CGI shots were done.

"The scientists were very rigorous," says James. "They were across every bit of that process, which makes it time consuming from a CGI point of view, but if you want something to be inarguably accurate, then it takes a lot of input."

He adds, "For us it was a question of having one part of the process, and then passing over the assets that could then be used in Canada."

The "long-gestating project" began filming in May 2010, and relied on a follow-up dig in Colombia to answer questions "about this land of giants," says James. The CGI components of *Titanoboa* took the team approximately six to eight months to complete.

In all, the final version will feature about 24 minutes of CGI in the 92-minute running time.

The program will debut on Smithsonian Channel in the U.S. in the spring of 2012.

Kelly Anderson ■

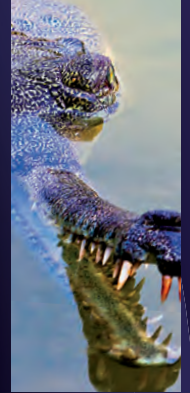
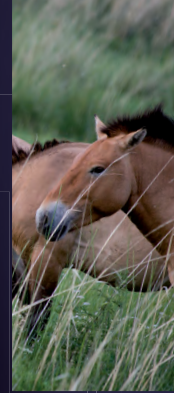
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With its *Prophets of Science Fiction* series, featuring *Blade Runner* director Ridley Scott, U.S. cable net Science is examining the relationship between the seeming flights of fancy in science fiction and the real-life exploits and advances of modern science.

BY BARRY WALSH

SCIENCE FICTION, SCIENCE FACT

In both the novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*, written by science-fiction legend Arthur C. Clarke, and the film version, directed by Stanley Kubrick, astronauts toted flat tablets, upon which they could watch broadcasts and read the news. Clarke called it the Newspad, and in the text of his novel, explained how it could be used – how a page of headlines would contain links to individual stories, and how, when the two-digit code for each story was entered, a postage-stamp sized rectangle containing the information could expand to take up the whole screen to make text legible.

Today, we know the device as the iPad. And while many herald it as a revolutionary media tool whose potential is just beginning to be tapped, it appears that Clarke saw that potential all along – in 1968.

The line that connects science fiction to science fact, as drawn by visionary sci-fi writers and filmmakers, is the focus of *Prophets of Science Fiction*, an 8 x 60-minute series from Science, which made its debut in early November. Produced by Ridley Scott's RDI Productions and Los Angeles-based Go Go Lucky, the series examines the prophetic writings of such sci-fi luminaries as Clarke, Isaac Asimov, H.G.

Wells and George Lucas with a combination of re-enactments, deep biographical info and commentary from both Scott and assorted scientists from various fields.

The origins of the series stem from a similarly titled one-off that aired on Discovery Science in 2006. Like the series, the original special examined the predictions of Wells and Jules Verne, as illustrated in such landmark works as Wells' *War of the Worlds* and Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

Bernadette McDaid, vice president of production for Science and executive producer on the series for the network, says that response to the special made it clear that the subject matter was "very on brand" for Science. "Then, when Ridley Scott became interested in the series it was clear that this was a slam dunk and we should move forward," she adds.

Scott, director of perhaps two of the most revered films in the modern sci-fi canon, *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, was brought to the table through conversations with Science general manager and executive vice president Debbie Myers, who had been in discussions with the filmmaker about collaborating on a project.

"What's important for us is to make science acceptable and popular for the masses so it doesn't become this exclusive club, it becomes inclusive," explains Myers. "You have to find a passion, a spark, from pop culture icons.

"When we brought the idea to his production company, he immediately sparked to it," she says.

Once the production partners were lined up, it was time to hone in on the right sci-fi visionaries to feature. Some were obvious choices, but care was taken to focus on what Myers calls "the legitimate prophets – those who moved the art form and science along."

"These writers were using the technology and science of the time to build their research on," says David Cargill, co-EP on the series for Go Go Lucky, with Gary and Julie Auerbach. "They were either scientists themselves, like Arthur C. Clarke, or they were tremendous researchers, and their contribution to science fiction was firmly embedded in science."

Cargill points to the premiere episode, which focuses on Mary Shelley and her novel, *Frankenstein*, as an example of how the featured authors were both keenly aware of scientific developments of the day and able to



extrapolate upon them. The story of the mad doctor and his creation was partially inspired by a dream, and also by actual experiments conducted by Italian physicist Giovanni Aldini, who attempted to draw correlations between electricity and the life force through processes that would reanimate dead animals and severed human limbs. Aldini's experiments are taken one giant step further by Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein, who, through his creation of life via the fusion of discarded bones and flesh, also gets the jump on limb transplant technology by about 175 years.

Through expert analysis from various scientists, including frequent Science collaborator and theoretical physicist Michio Kaku, various prophecies from the authors' works are put under the microscope, and, as seen with the Arthur C. Clarke iPad example, the links aren't so tenuous. Both Cargill and McDaid say that the connections between the fictions of past centuries and the facts of today illustrate the influence science fiction has had historically on scientific thought.

"For H.G. Wells, we looked at the heat ray which was one of his prophecies in *War of the Worlds*," says Cargill. "We then looked at [modern] laser technology and when we talked to [scientists at laser and defense

system developers] Textron, immediately they said they had read *War of the Worlds* and were fascinated by it."

"It's an exciting and rich topic area, and we found the scientists interviewed felt the same way," says McDaid. "They were very much impassioned and emboldened to push the boundaries of their scientific work because of the novels they'd read or movies they'd seen as children."

With *Prophets* airing in November and in February of 2012, the process of predicting its future will also be steeped in science – the science of ratings. Myers says that while no firm international distribution plans have been set, Discovery's international partners will get first look.

And while it may have been a challenge to arrive at the first eight prophets to be featured, all parties agree there's more where those came from, and even with the visionaries already featured, there are more prophecies yet to come true.

"What I love about the Arthur C. Clarke episode is that his predictions are so advanced that we're just at the first step for a lot of them, and there are so many scientists who were inspired to pursue his dreams," says McDaid. "My only regret is that I'm not going to be here in 100 years to see those come to pass." ■■

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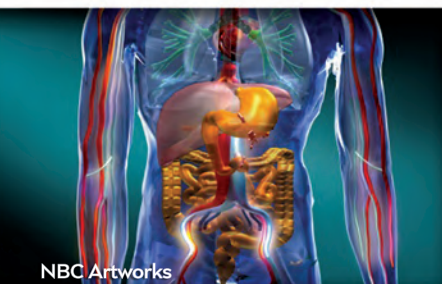
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DOUBLE VISION

BY KELLY ANDERSON

Two new specialist science prodcos launched this year, headed up by formidable factual figureheads. Here, *realscreen* talks to Sonya Pemberton and Walter Köhler about their new endeavors and how they aim to resurrect science programming for the international market.

While the science genre is consistently both reporting on and engaging with new technologies and discoveries, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the pool of science production companies isn't expanding as much as it is in the factual entertainment genre.

Thankfully, new science specialists are entering the picture, two of which emerged this year to bring their unique approaches in science production to the table.

GENERATING GENEPOOL

Earlier in 2011, Pemberton Films principal Sonya Pemberton and Sydney-based prodco Cordell Jigsaw teamed up to create a specialist scientific production company, Melbourne-based Genepool Productions, which Pemberton says combines their individual skill sets and talents.

"I'm the science geek with a strong track record in science programming, and they are one of the best production houses in Australia," she tells *realscreen*.

The Australian producers chose to team up in order to create a larger number of projects, while maintaining high quality standards. Pemberton's credits feature numerous award-winning science films, including *Immortal*, produced in association with December Films, SBS and National Geographic, which recently grabbed the best science and nature award at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival.

Cordell Jigsaw, founded by Michael Cordell and Nick Murray, works in factual, entertainment and drama, and its credits include the *Bondi Rescue* ob-doc series and SBS's three-part doc, *Go Back to Where You Came From*.

"To use a biological metaphor in keeping with our name, it's about increasing diversity and evolving," says Pemberton. "The world is changing, television and



Pemberton



Cordell

audiences are changing, science is changing — diversity and adaptation are vital for success. We are pooling our production talents to create a strong, well adapted and successful new science-based production house."

Pemberton believes that new science specialists should be prepared to convey the complexities of scientific thought through accessible, entertaining programming — while steering clear of dumbing down the content.

"I think the world needs specialist science translators, now more than ever," she says. "There are huge issues to grapple with, not least the fact that many people blame science for many of today's woes and yet expect science to deliver the solutions. It's vital we understand the process that is science, through the stories of our times.

"Our job, as I see it, is to translate significant but perhaps difficult to understand science and transform it into an easily understood, accessible and entertaining form," she continues. "And, like a gymnast at the Olympics, we need to make it look effortless."

She trumpets what she calls "intimate science" — a blend of science facts and "emotion, intuition, beauty and belief" — which has the potential to appeal to

broadcasters and audiences alike.

"Science is potent and transformative; it's a powerful tool in shaping how we think, feel and live," she says. "And in a world awash with science denial, misinformation and fear, I believe there is an ever-increasing need to better understand science and its implications. So establishing Genepool as a specialist science production company makes perfect sense."

Both Pemberton Films and Cordell Jigsaw have previously worked with the major broadcasters in Australia, and Pemberton headed up specialist factual at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) from 2004 to 2006. But Genepool has its sights set on worldwide broadcasters, both public and commercial. Pemberton says that the new prodco currently is in discussions with PBS in the U.S. for a major project and that its slate also includes several major doc series, including *Jabbed: The Truth about Vaccines*, which looks at the growing trend of vaccination suspicion and refusal around the world. Genepool is also developing various formats and series, "collaborating with a range of filmmakers and scientists interested in pursuing smart and significant science programming for local and global markets," she adds.

MAKING TERRA MATER MATTER

Meanwhile, in Vienna, a new prodco with science, wildlife and history as its pillars and another well-known factual figure as its head set up shop in January 2011. Former ORF-Universum head Walter Köhler, with the wildlife strand since 1987 as filmmaker, producer and series producer, left the Austrian broadcaster at the end of 2010 to launch Terra Mater Factual Studios, in partnership with Red Bull Media House, taking his 13-member Universum team with him.

Köhler says the aim of the new prodco, when it comes to its science work, is to bring well-crafted technique to visually sensational productions.

"What we also wanted to do is to give the audience an easier access [into science,] and go into a broader entertainment view," he adds. "I think this is the specialty which I developed for Universum at ORF and of course what we are doing now with Terra Mater."

The new shop already has 40 hours in production. Titles include *The Neanderthal Puzzle*, which focuses on a discovered tomb of bones and the clues they serve up; and *Eyes of the Atacama*, which centers around the biggest space observatory built by man. In addition, the company is producing a 3D special entitled *You*,

Planet, which will depict the human body as a planet of its own, and will feature the first 3D shots out of an electron microscope. Broadcasters working with Terra Mater include the BBC and NDR, and the prodco also has an output deal with Red Bull Media House's free-to-air European channel Servus TV.

Köhler says these types of projects should appeal to a large amount of people, as opposed to being "interesting for 50 people around the world."

He maintains that Terra Mater's output aims for a middle ground between the two extremes of late-night, "pure" science programming and fact ent-oriented science that focuses more on the "How do they do it?" angle. According to Köhler, the approach marries blue chip production values to a "narrative thread which has tension, drama, entertainment

and is scientifically correct and on the edge."

He also believes there's a growing international market for more populist science programming. "At the moment, I would love to see more science which could broadcast in primetime," he says. "I see a lot of

things which are factual entertainment-oriented in series form, with *MythBusters* and [other] formats.

"There are quite a lot of specials which are very egg-headed so they're not quite what you would need in a continental European primetime market," he continues. "I think there should be more visually attractive, good storytelling specials and ideas; there's a market for that." ■



Köhler

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VIEW FROM THE TOP

NHK is collaborating with NASA and the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA, on an ambitious project, *The Cosmic Shore*, which utilizes specially-developed HD camera technology to bring viewers new perspectives on such phenomena as auroras and lightning, and breathtaking depictions of the earth from above. Here, NHK producer Hideki Tazuke discusses the challenges and triumphs of the high-flying initiative with *realscreen*. BY BARRY WALSH

Fifty years ago, in 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human being to leave the earth's atmosphere and enter the final frontier – space. While gazing at the world from his peculiar perch, in the cramped quarters of Vostok 1, he couldn't contain his wonder. "The earth is blue," he told Ground Control. "How wonderful. How amazing."

Today, we see spellbinding images from the infinite via such marvels as the Hubble Telescope, and can follow outer space exploits of assorted missions, including that of the International Space Station, online. But the wonder remains.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK has historically proven itself to be on the vanguard when it comes to bringing such remarkable imagery to earthbound audiences. From 1992's first live broadcast from the space shuttle, in which Japanese astronaut Mamoru Mohri gave a "space lesson" to elementary school children, to 2006's first-ever live HD broadcast from the International Space Station (ISS), NHK has

devoted considerable air-time and R&D to its space programming. Its current *Cosmic Shore* endeavor, which encompasses live broadcasts from the ISS and an upcoming three-part series, coproduced with Discovery Channel Canada, the National Film Board of Canada and France Télévisions, is the latest example of its commitment to bringing the amazement felt by Gagarin to audiences around the globe.

According to NHK senior producer Hideki Tazuke, the idea for the *Cosmic Shore* project crystallized in 2009, as an outgrowth of previous space series produced by the pubcaster. "All the past astronauts that we had worked with had commented about their strong impression about the beauty of our planet Earth [as] seen at night," he says. But it was a beauty unseen by television audiences at that point, as camera technology didn't have enough sensitivity to effectively capture the earth at night.

With the development by NHK's technical team of a super-sensitive HD camera that

could be used by an astronaut and could also withstand higher levels of radiation than previous iterations, the project took a major leap forward.

"Earlier high sensitivity cameras had been able to capture images in darkness but were often very delicate and required careful usage by a professional cameraman or otherwise broke when shooting bright images," explains Tazuke. "With the new Super-Sensitivity HDTV (SS-HDTV) camera, it is possible to automatically adjust from dark to light shooting conditions. So it enables one to, say, shoot the sun and then shoot the Earth in the darkness after sunset.

"It's truly a revolutionary invention, and thanks to this camera, we are now able to see exactly what only astronauts could see with their eyes," he adds.

In collaboration with the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), NHK arranged to have one of the Japanese astronauts aboard the ISS, Satoshi Furukawa, learn to use the

Airglow above the earth and city lights are among the sights featured in NHK's live *Cosmic Shore* broadcasts (photo: NASA Archive)

“Of course, there was no chance of having the luxury of rehearsals... The first live linkup of the broadcast was supremely nerve-wracking.”

camera, and shoot footage for a live broadcast on September 18. During four 10-minute link-ups between the ISS and NHK, Furukawa would transmit images taken with the SS-HDTV camera back to earth for broadcast. But they wouldn't be just any images – producers wanted the astronaut to document examples of rare phenomena that hadn't yet been captured from the vantage point of space in high quality HD. Those phenomena ranged from vivid auroras and lightning showers, to sparkling vistas of major cities at night and the most difficult event to capture, upper atmospheric lightning, or “sprites.”

Test runs of image transmissions proved that the camera, and the astronaut cameraman, could deliver great stuff. “From the beginning of the project, I wrestled with the fear that we might end up seeing or capturing nothing,” admits Tazuke. “I remember the first downlink images in July from the ISS; we saw nothing and I really understood how pitch black outer space is. So we were totally overwhelmed with emotion when we saw the second downlink images in August of the aurora, lightning, and the earth's surface.

“We were so happy, the NHK and JAXA teams were almost in tears,” he says.

But ensuring that lightning would strike twice, especially in space, would be a formidable challenge.

“Considering that the ISS orbits the earth in 90 minutes and that it was essential to do the live linkups when the ISS was exactly in places where the sprites, lightning, auroras, and other phenomena occurs, the venture was unprecedented and extremely ambitious,” says Tazuke. Add to that the fact that air resistance in space means that the ISS has to frequently change its flight path, and you have ample room for disappointment.

“The director prepared 19 different scripts to cover conceivable situations,” recalls Tazuke.

“Of course, there was no chance of having the luxury of doing rehearsals. And of course, there was a great possibility that no phenomena would occur during the live

linkup, along with the possibility that even though it might occur, the camera wouldn't be able to capture that exact moment.

“The first live linkup of the broadcast was supremely nerve-racking,” he admits.

Thankfully, the stars aligned and the four live linkups delivered everything the crew on earth was hoping to see. Auroras, city lights at night, lightning storms, sunrise and sunset, moonset, and airglow – the emission of light created by the earth's atmosphere that insures that the sky is never completely dark, even at night – were

and handing off the SS-HDTV camera to another astronaut, he's being tasked with one more money shot – an aurora fly-through, never before captured in HD. But even if he doesn't get that shot, Tazuke says the impact the live broadcasts have had on audiences in Japan has made the project a complete success; an impact that he hopes the upcoming mini-series will receive internationally.

“Through this mission, I reconfirmed the significance of ‘live’ broadcasting,” he says. “Aside from the excitement of the NHK



The International Space Station's astronaut-turned-cameraman Satoshi Furukawa (Photo: NHK)

all depicted. “It was as though the phenomena each appeared on cue,” marvels Tazuke.

It also helped that Satoshi Furukawa proved to be as skillful a cameraman as an astronaut, focusing and panning in zero gravity and positioning himself and the camera to get the best shots during the 10-minute intervals.

Shooting on the ISS is continuing, in order to create more content for the three-part series, which will begin airing in Japan in April of 2012. While Furukawa will be returning to earth at the end of November

and JAXA staff all cheering and applauding every time we received images of an aurora or other phenomenon, the inspirational emotion created by knowing that these phenomena are happening at that very moment leaves us speechless.

“I think the notion that the universe is connected to the very Earth we are living on is what touches us,” he continues. “During the live broadcast, there was a surge of tweets on Twitter, so I think the audience also felt this. And I was touched once again to experience this amazing moment with the audience.” ■

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Sheldon Lazarus has left his role as creative director at DCD Media's September Films to set up Rize, an indie which will aim to take a new approach to selling formats across the Atlantic.

BY ADAM BENZINE



Lazarus

Following the UK success of September Films' magic-focused gameshow format *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*, the firm's creative director Sheldon Lazarus has left the company to form a new venture in partnership with September's parent DCD Media.

Rize will be headquartered in London with a production office in Los Angeles, and will focus on producing factual, fact ent and reality programming for the international market.

The firm will attempt to build upon what Lazarus describes as "the Penn & Teller model," taking American onscreen talent over to the UK to produce a short-run series, then selling the format of that series back into the States.

Lazarus names the model for American magicians Penn Jillette and Teller, who teamed up with September Films to make a gameshow pilot, *Fool Us*, for UK terrestrial ITV1 at the start of the year.

Its success prompted an eight-episode season order for the show. DCD is now looking to produce a Russian version of the format.

Crucially, the magicians get a share of the show's IP — something that would not happen if the first commission came from a U.S. network.

"If we get a piece of American talent on UK TV, that talent has got rights," Lazarus tells *realscreen*. "That's the model we want to follow. The American non-fiction market is where the money is."

In addition to *Fool Us*, Lazarus's track record includes exec producing U.S. net A&E's reality series *Billy the Exterminator* and TLC's *Mall Cops: Mall of America*, as well as BBC1's *Richard Hammond's Blast Lab*.

As creative director of the new venture, he will split his time between the West Coast and the UK, and will oversee a staff that is currently in the process of being assembled.

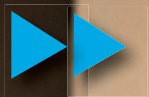
"We're recruiting in LA and putting a development team together," Lazarus says. "We'll probably have a team of about 20 split between LA and London."

Rize is represented stateside by CAA, and DCD owns a stake in the new indie.

"I know them, they've got a good infrastructure, and a good presence in LA," says Lazarus of the parent company.

For DCD Media's part, CEO David Green says that Rize "fits perfectly with our strategy of taking advantage of opportunities present on both side of the Atlantic, and furthers the group's aim to strengthen our position in the non-fiction market."

With Lazarus leaving September Films, the indie has hired Simon Broadley — previously head of development at BBC Birmingham — to take on the newly created role of head of development. ■



THE MAN WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

BY KELLY ANDERSON

In 2005, tattoo artist Ami James and Original Media kick-started a wave of tattoo shop docuseries with TLC's *Miami Ink*. Spin-offs *LA Ink* and *London Ink* have since carried on the format, with each series providing air time for the inked and the stories behind their new tattoos, as well as the camaraderie and drama between tattoo crews. James, the granddaddy of "tattoo TV," returned to TLC earlier this summer with a whole new crew and a fresh locale, New York City, with the debut of *NY Ink*.

James, who got his first pro tattoo at the age of 15 (a dragon, for the record) now splits his time between the Miami location and the New York shop, named Wooster St. Social Club. Heading into December's second season premiere for the latest edition of the franchise, James is out to prove that audiences still have an appetite for ink.

What made you decide to come back to TLC for a second series, after a three-year hiatus?

I figured since I created the brand with TLC I would continue the journey with them and there was a lot of unsettled business.

Do you approach the New York show differently than you did with *Miami Ink*?

Not by choice, but the approach has to be different. New York is so fast paced there is no way for me to compare the two. The dynamic of life is so different [and] the shows mirror that. The biggest difference is Miami travels at about 30 miles an hour and New York travels at about 100 miles an hour.

How do the camera crews affect your day-to-day business?

It doesn't really affect me anymore, or the business. I'm pretty used to it after 110 episodes. In fact, I might feel awkward without them there.

Are there any tattoos that you regret getting, or are there any you've done that you aren't so proud of?

As an artist there are always tattoos you would like to see yourself doing better in the future, but none I regret doing. As for the tattoos I have, it is sort of the same situation; I wish I had more really good tattoos, but I do not regret getting tattooed.

Why have you kept your Miami shop and how do you split your time between the two cities?

I go back and forth each week. I kept that shop because it is my baby.

How many episodes are you shooting for *NY Ink*'s second season, and what can viewers expect?

There will be 10 episodes [with] less drama, thank God, and more about our personal lives. You will get to see each character and [learn] something about them personally. The biggest surprises are yet to come. ■

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